

Present

Charles Bonenti, Van Ellet, Cheryl Shanks, Leigh Short, Cathy Yamamoto (chair)

Absent: Bilal Ansari

Also Present: Donna Bishop, Joan Burns, Zara Currimjee, Margaret Harwood, Tom Hyde, Jack Madden, Matt Silliman, Lauren Stevens, Sarah Thurston, Kim Wells; Jaime Bairstow--Willinet; three others.

Business

1. The minutes of the October 9 meeting were approved 4-0-1.

2. Housing needs assessment / Market analysis

The AHC received one response to the six requests it solicited. The response is from John Ryan, who has worked in Williamstown in the past. The proposal is paired with a sealed bid held by the Town Manager. The committee voted to engage John Ryan to do this work, conditional on the bid being both reasonable and below the legal limit requiring RFPs, 4-0-1.

3. New Business: Town Application to FEMA announced at the Selectmen's meeting November 13. Questions and discussion with audience.

- A. Tom Hyde asked whether the town proposal is dependent on the Lowry property specifically. No, the proposal recommends but does not require that the Lowry property be used to build affordable housing.
- B. Donna Bishop asked how to think about moving from or selling her house in the Spruces given that the park will close down. The committee took her name and contact information to give to Susan Puddester at Higher Ground and to town hall.
- C. Margaret Harwood asked what to do if the park closed before new housing was ready, and what sort of housing to expect as a substitute. The committee did not know but believed that anyone being moved from the Spruces would be consulted by those building or matching residents with new housing.
- D. Matt Silliman asked how the Lowry property would be accessed, given that some routes would have to cross wetlands. The committee did not know since the answer would appear to come from a study funded in part by the FEMA grant, which hasn't been approved. Matt Silliman also assured some Spruces residents that he would be happy to have them as neighbors, and was simply concerned that any transition be thought through to create the best balance of uses.
- E. Kim Wells stated that from an agricultural point of view, the swap of Lowry for Spruces was a net loss because a hefty portion of the Spruces is already leased for agricultural use and he has 18 to 20 acres of the Lowry property. A diminution of farmable Lowry land and/or any extension of recreational use in the Spruces land would result in less farmable land. The Lowry use least disruptive to agriculture would be to build on the 6 acres closest to Stratton Hills Condos. He said that he too wanted to see the best possible joint use, and considered remarks about housing prices, reported in the news and attributed to Cheryl Shanks, to be counterproductive.
- F. Sarah Thurston said that Friends of Williamstown Conservation Lands, a newly formed group, will host walks in the Lowry property at 1:00 every Sunday in December, starting in the Stratton Condos parking lot corner.

- G. Zara Currimjee said that a Williams student group was going to present their evaluation of five town sites in a public presentation on December 10 at 5 pm in Griffin Hall room 5, Williams College.
- H. Lauren Stevens said that the Hoosac River floodplain remained a dangerous place to live, and moving people to a safer location was urgent.
- I. Jack Madden noted that it should be possible to take only a part of Lowry out of conservation, not have to change the status of the whole parcel.
- J. In response to Ms. Bishop's question about the cause of the flooding at The Spruces, Tom Hyde responded that because The Spruces is part of the Hoosic River's watershed, all water will flow downhill and downriver across the flood plain in which the park sits. Additionally, the ground was so saturated due to the heavy rains and the water table and river so high during Irene that the water just had nowhere else to go except to the lowest point, which was the mobile home park.

4. Cooperation with the Conservation Commission

- A. Van, a member of ConCom, was at its November 8 meeting at which the AHC letter requesting that the ConCom begin to think about taking Lowry out of conservation was discussed. ConCom advised that perhaps the next step should be for the AHC to write a formal letter to the ConCom and the Selectmen requesting that the restrictions be lifted.
- B. At the same time, the selectmen had asked Town Council to clarify the process by which restrictions on Lowry could be removed. In summary, Town Counsel's answer was:
 - 1. ConCom would have to vote that Lowry is surplus and is no longer needed as conservation land.
 - 2. Town Meeting would then have to vote by 2/3 to transfer ownership from ConCom to the Town and declare the property as surplus property
 - 3. The Selectmen could then convey the property to another entity.

4. Sites

- A. PhoTech is uncontaminated to the point that housing could be built on it if it did not involve constructing single family homes. To remediate to a level acceptable for single-family homes would necessitate additional, extensive remediation.
- B. Water Street. The additional work that we requested and are helping to pay for is just getting underway.

5. Mission Statement

The committee discussed and amended a draft mission statement, and will continue to consider its language before finalizing it.

6. Web site

The committee believes that posting many of the documents it generates and receives on a web site would be publicly useful, and will think about how and what to post.

7. To do

Distribute John Ryan's report for Hinesburg, VT
Attend upcoming meetings of Selectmen, Planning Board, ConCom

Documents consulted: Spruces Proposal 11/13/2012; draft mission statements; Ryan Proposal 11/15/2012; Kopelman & Paige list of steps to remove a parcel from conservation 11/20/2012; "Phase II Comprehensive Site Assessment" PhoTech Report from Tighe & Bond August 2012; PhoTech Asbestos Report from Tighe & Bond 9/24/2012; O'Reilly, Talbot & Okun reports on the Town Garage Site dated 7/27/2012, 9/7/2012, and 10/19/2012,

Next meeting: December 18 (Tuesday) at 7 p.m.